AN ANSWER TO A LETTER

From a Clergyman in the City, to his Friend in the Country, Containing his REASONS for not Reading the *Declaration.*

With Allowance, June the 4th. 1688.

SIR, LETTER.

I Do not wonder at your concern for finding an Order of Council published in the Gazette for Reading the King's Declaration for Liberty of Conscience in all Churches and Chappels in this Kingdom. You desire to know my Thoughts about it, and I shall freely tell them; for this is not a time to be reserved.

Our Enemies who have given our Gracious King this Counsel against us, have taken the most effectual way not only to ruin us, but to make us appear the Instruments of our own Ruin, that what course soever we take, we shall be undone; and one side or other will conclude that we have undone our selves, and fall like Fools.

ANSWER.

They who had formerly heard the frequent Sermons upon Loyalty preach'd over Tea and Coffee at *Sam's* Coffee-House, would hardly then have believ'd that ever any Clergyman of *London* of that stamp, would have been seen in publick pickeering against the Orders of his Prince, especially issued forth after mature debate in Council. I know not how he can boast such a vast

flock of Loyalty as this Gentleman pretends to, when he shall be so bonely as to tax the King with following Council to the Ruin of his Subjects. So that the business of this Pamphlet is to render his Majesty a person that follows ill Counsel to the Ruin of the Church of *England*'s Party. Nor is it to be question'd but that this single Clergyman speaks the sense of many more, or at least would have many more believe, what he does. *That what course soever they take they shall be undone.* And yet we find that his Majesty has publickly declar'd it to be his Aim to fix his Government upon such a Foundation as may make his Subjects happy in the injoyment of their Religion with freedom of Exercise, and their Property without Invasion. However this Loyal *Town Clergyman* is an Infidel that will give no credit at all to the solemn Attestations of the King in this particular. Nay he will have it, that *both the one and the other side will conclude that they have undone themselves, and fall like fools*; that is to say, should they have Read the Declaration in their Churches according to the order of Council. By which it is apparant that the Church of *England* men have a very bad opinion not only of the Declaration, but of the very design and meaning of it as if it were fram'd to draw them first into inconvenience and then to undo them. For says he,

LETTER.

To lose our Livings and Preferments, nay our Liberties and Lives in a plain and direct opposition to Popery, as suppose for refusing to read Mass in our Churches, or to swear to the Trent-Creed, *is an honourable way of falling, and has the divine comforts of suffering for Christ and his Religion; and I hope there is none of us but can chearfully submit to the will of God in it. But this is not our present Case; to read the Declaration, is not to read the Mass, nor to profess the* Romish *Faith; and therefore some will judg that there is no hurt in reading it, and that to suffer for such a refusal, is not to fall like Confessors, but to suffer as Criminals for disobeying the lawful Commands of our Prince: but yet we judge, and we have the concurring Opinions of all the Nobility and Gentry with us, who have already suffered in this Cause, that to take away the Test and Penal Laws at this time, is but one step from the introducing of Popery; and therefore to read such a Declaration in our Churches, though it do not immediatly bring Popery in, yet it sets open our Church doors for it, and then it will take its own time to enter:*

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So that should we comply with this Order, all good Protestants would despise and hate us, and then we may be easily crushed, and shall soon fall with great dishonour and without any pity. This is the difficulty of our Case; we shall be censur'd on both sides but with this difference: We shall fall a little sooner by not reading the Declaration, if our Gracious Prince resent this as an act of an obstinate and peevish or factious Disobedience, as our Enemies will be sure to represent it to him; We shall as certainly fall, and not long after, if we do read it, and then we shall fall unpitied and despised, and it may be with the Curses of the Nation, whom we have ruined by our compliance; and this is the way never to rise more. And may I suffer all that can be suffered in this World, rather than contribute to the final Ruin of the best Church in the World.

ANSWER.

Here is a very plausible Harangue built upon the bare supposition of a *single Town Clergyman*, while he refuses to read the Declaration which is the very Act of his Majesties Grace and Favour that secures him from all those fears and jealousies which he labours to instill into the People. Nor is it to be thought that men of Reason and Loyalty, will as the City Clergyman seems to be convinc'd, so readily believe that the King and his Council sit to impose Dilemma's upon the Subject. *We shall fall if we do, and we shall fall if we do not read it.* But this is only the Clergyman's supposal; On the other side, the refusal to read it is an unquestionable Act of Disobedience to the Command of the Soveraign Authority, than which there cannot be a greater mark of that Disloyalty which the Clergy of the Establish'd Religion so much disown. Besides that it is a Disobedience to the Orders of the Church it self, which injoyns her Ministers to read during the time of Divine Service whatever is injoyned by the King. But, says he, *the Reading such a Declaration in our Churches, though it do not immediately bring in Popery, yet it sets open our Church doors for it, and then it will take its own time to enter.* But says the Declaration, In the first place we do declare, That we will protect and maintain our Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy, and all other our Subjects of the Church of *England*, in the free exercise of their Religion, as by Law Establish'd, and in the full injoyment of all their Possessions without any molestation or disturbance whatsoever. Here is

the word of a King to bar the Introducing of Popery ſo much fear'd: which if it were ſacred as coming from the Lips of a Crowned Head, they would have render'd ſtill more ſolemn by reading it in their Churches. And therefore the refuſal of it ſeems to be rather an Act of wilful indiſcretion, than of that Religious Care and wary Zeal to which the *City Clergy-man* pretends.

LETTER.

Let us then examine this matter impartially, as thoſe who have no mind either to ruine themſelves, or to ruine the Church: I ſuppoſe no Miniſter of the Church of England *can give his conſent to the Declaration. Let us then conſider whether reading the Declaration in our Churches be not an interpretative Conſent, and will not with great reaſon be interpreted to be ſo: For,*

Firſt, By our Law all Miniſterial Officers are accountable for their Actions: The Authority of Superiors, though of the King himſelf, cannot juſtifie inferiour Officers, much leſs the Miniſters of State, if they ſhould execute any illegal Commands; which ſhews, that our Law does not look upon the Miniſters of Church or State to be meer Machines and Tools to be managed wholly by the Will of Superiours, without exerciſing any Act of Judgment or Reaſon themſelves; for then inferiour Miniſters were no more puniſhable than the Horſes are which draw an innocent man to Tyburn: *and if inferiour Miniſters are puniſhable, then our Laws ſuppoſe that what we do in obedience to Superiours, we make our own Act by doing it, and I ſuppoſe that ſignifies our Conſent, in the eye of the Law, to what we do. It is a Maxim in our Law,* That the King can do no wrong; *and therefore if any wrong be done, the Crime and Guilt is the Miniſter's who does it: For the Laws are the King's publick Will, and therefore he is never ſuppoſed to command any thing contrary to Law; nor is any Miniſter, who does an illegal Action, allowed to pretend the King's Command and Authority for it: and yet this is the only Reaſon I know, why we muſt not obey a Prince againſt the Laws of the Land, or the Laws of God, becauſe what we do, let the Authority be what it will that commands it, becomes our own Act, and we are reſponſible for it; and then as I obſerved before, it muſt imply our own Conſent.*

ANSWER.

This Paragraph runs all along upon a meer Begging the Queſtion. For it would enforce an Argument from a Topick that neither

ther can nor ought to be allowed him: Beſides, that it ſmells very ſtrong of Common-wealth Logick: as pickeering againſt the Power of Princes, and inſinuating the Declaration to be illegal, contrary to the Laws of God and the Land, and therefore not to be obey'd. So that a greater preſumption certainly could not have enter'd the Breaſt of a Clergy-man of the Church of *England*, than thus to queſtion the Legality of the King's Publick Acts. Certainly it was never thought unlawful, till this Gentleman found it out, for a King to grant an Act of Indulgence and a Toleration of Religion to his Subjects. And then again to ſay, *the King can do no wrong*, inſinuates that ſome Body has *done wrong*, in adviſing the Order: which is a Reflexion of too great Importance for men of Loyal Diſpoſitions to ſcan. If he mean that the Order, or rather the Declaration, is contrary to the Law of the Land, that is to ſay, to the *Penal Laws*, and the Law enforcing the *Teſt*, that is abſolutely to deny the King's Royal Power of Diſpenſation, which has already render'd them invalid. For he ſhould have firſt made it out that the *Penal Laws* and *Teſt* were ſuch Sacred and Inviolable Statutes, that all things done contrary to them, were contrary to Juſtice and Equity, before he had ſo fully Inferr'd an Impoſſibility of giving his Conſent to reading the *Declaration*, as contrary to the Law of the Land, and the Act of a Superiour Authority nor juſtifiable by the King himſelf. But this Gentleman did not conſider that there is no ſuch Streſs to be laid upon the Sanctimony of the Penal Laws, and that ſupporting the *Teſt*. For that the Conditions of all Humane Laws are, That the Law be Honeſt, Juſt, Poſſible, Convenient to Time and Place, and Conformable to Religion and Reaſon. In every one of which Characters the Penal Laws, *&c.* are deficient, if for no other, though there are many, yet for that very Reaſon alledg'd in His Majeſties Declaration, becauſe they diſcourage and diſable his Majeſties Subjects that are well inclin'd and fit to ſerve him, from doing him thoſe Services which by the Law of Nature they are bound to do. But he goes on

LETTER.

Secondly, *The Miniſters of Religion have a greater tye and obligation than this, becauſe they have the care and conduct of mens Souls, and therefore are bound to take care that what they publiſh in their Churches, be neither contrary to the Laws of the Land, nor to the good*

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of the Church: For the Ministers of Religion are not looks upon as common Criers, but what they Read, they are supposed to recommend to, though they do no more than Read it; and therefore to read any thing in the Church, which I do not consent to and approve, may which I think prejudicial to Religion, and the Church of God, as well as contrary to the Laws of the Land, is to Mis-guide my People, and to Dissemble with God and Men, because it is presum'd, that I neither do, nor ought to read any thing in the Church, which I do not in some degree approve.

A N S W E R.

If Arrogance and high Conceit might pass for Arguments, here is a fair shew of both: For one would think that the Head of the Church might be as competent a Judge of what is fittest to be read in the Churches under his protection, as the Parson of the Parish. Whoever thinks otherwise must have a very low opinion of the Head, who takes upon him to be so wise and censorious a Member. When the Head of the Church sends his Mandates and Injunctions to his inferior Ministers, Reason does in no measure justifie their Disputes and Oppositions to the Inverting the Order of Nature. And therefore it would have argu'd a much more noble confidence in the truth of his Majesties Sincerity and Piety, to have read without boggling, the *Declaration* recommended to their publishing in Churches, which they could not in good Manners believe that their Sovereign Head would have enjoyn'd them, had he not fore-deem'd it both proper and warrantable. We find the *Declaration* grounded upon the solid foundation of Constant Royal *Sense* and *Opinion*, which no question, had the Concurrence of many able Divines of the first Order in the Church, among whom that Learned Prelate, and famous Combatant against the Church of *Rome*, the B. of *L.* appears to be none of the meanest. So that upon so fair a poise, besides the over-ballancing judgement of the King himself, the Opposition of any other *Sanhedrim* within this Nation, can never be thought to be so equal as they pretend, in their own Cause; A Cause wherein Interest, rather than any deep sense of Religion seems to carry the greater sway. The *Declaration* duly consider'd, and fram'd with mature deliberation, is of one Judgment, but They, hand over-head, are of another: The *Declaration* finding the Consciences of the Subjects pester'd and incumber'd with *Penal Laws*, *Oaths*, and *Tests*, endeavours

yours to remove those incumbrances. They on the other side, strive to uphold the Dagons of their Animosity against all other Opinions but their own. Who are now to be the Deciders of this Controversie? who indeed but the Soveraign Authority in the person of the King who is Gods Vicegerent; and to whom for that very reason, unless they will deprive him of that supream Dignity, all other persons are bound to submit, there being no higher Tribunal upon Earth to give a more Authentic Determination. And therefore it was that *Cicero* in his Oration for *Cluentius*, tells us, that the Supream Magistrate is the Judge of the Laws, and the cheif Interpreter of the Law; we only the Servants of the Law, that we may be free. Which being so true as it is, what must be thought of them that set up an Interpretation of their own against the Interpretation of the Soveraign Magistrate? But the City Clergyman goes on with a very quaint Distinction.

LETTER.

Indeed, let mens private opinions be what they will, in the nature of the thing, he that reads such a Declaration to his People, teaches them by it. For is not Reading Teaching? Suppose then I do not consent to what I read, yet I consent to teach my People what I read; and herein is the evil of it; for it may be it were no fault to consent to the Declaration, but if I consent to teach my People what I do not consent to, my self, I am sure that is a great one: And he who can distinguish between consenting to read the Declaration, and consenting to teach the People by the Declaration, when reading the Declaration is teaching it, has a very subtile distinguishing Conscience. Now if consenting to read the Declaration be a consent to teach it my People, then the natural Interpretation of Reading the Declaration, is, That he who Reads it, in such a solemn teaching manner, Approves it. If this be not so, I desire to know, why I may not read an Homily for Transubstantiation, or Invocation of Saints, or the worship of Images, if the King sends me such good Catholic Homilies, and commands me to read them? And thus we may instruct our People in all the points of Popery, and recommend it to them with all the Sophistry and artificial Insinuations, in obedience to the King, with a very good Conscience, because without our consent: If it be said, this would be a contradiction to the Doctrine of our Church by Law Established; so I take the Declaration to be; And if we may read the Declaration

claration contrary to Law, because it does not imply our consent to it; so we may Popish Homilies, for the bare reading them will not imply our consent, no more than the reading the Declaration does: But whether I consent to the Doctrine or no, it is certain I consent to teach my People this Doctrine; and it is to be considered, whether an honest man can do this.

ANSWER.

The first Question here is, Whether a man that consents to read, consents to teach? Or rather, Whether Teaching and Reading be all one? Certainly no man of reason but will believe the City-Clergy-man was very hard put to it to lay the stress of a Refusal to obey the Command of Soveraign Authority upon a Cavill about the signification of a word or two. Who could have imagin'd it would ever have been requisite for the Council to have consulted a Tribunal of Grammarians to obviate such an Objection as this, before they issu'd forth the Order for Reading the Declaration. But whether Teaching and Reading be all one, is nothing here to the purpose; For there is not any thing as yet appears in the Letter which proves the Declaration unlawful to be read: Which he ought first to have done before he had gone about to split the signification of Words to gratifie a Conscience, therefore squeamish because over-surfeited with the Kings Favours. For there is no Person in *England* ought to uphold that Law which the King condemns, if it be not in it self unjust and contrary to the Union of Mankind. For the Introducing of *Popery* into *England*, or the Abolishing of any Laws that may prevent it, if it be the Will and Pleasure of the Soveraign Government, is no more Illegal in it self, than it was for the *United Netherlands* to abolish *Popery* and introduce the *Protestant Religion* into their Dominions, contrary to the Constitutions of the Empire, and the Laws of *Spain*. So that this *City-Clergyman* moves all this while upon an Allertion, That the *Declaration* is Illegal and contrary to the Law of the Land. For if the King of *England* may be depriv'd of his undoubted Right of Altering, Repealing, or Suspending such Laws as are inconsistent with those Maxims of Rule which he proposes at his coming to the Crown, and which he finds destructive to the greatest part of his Subjects, he loses one of the greatest Advantages which he enjoys, to pursue those Methods of Govern-

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ment which he deems most proper for the renowning his Reign in future History. So much the more hard, when the only means which he accounts most proper for his purposes shall be condemn'd for Unlawful by a nice Splitter of Verbal signification. And yet the distinction of Reading and Consenting is not so difficult as he pretends. For Consent is an agreement of Thoughts as well as Words. But a man may read the Story of *Bell* and the *Dragon* in the Church, and yet not agree it to be Orthodox. Nor can a man by reading be said to teach his People, unless he inculcates what he reads by Instruction: for tho' Instruction comprehends Reading, Reading does not comprehend Instruction. Which is the reason there are so many Ignorant Persons in the World, to whom the *Bible* and the *Creed* it self are read every *Sunday* in the Year, and yet at the Years end they are not able to tell ye whose Son *Jesus Christ* is, or who was *Solomon's* Father. And whereas he says, *the King might as well command him to read a Homily for Transubstantiation, as the Declaration*, the Inference is false, The one being an Actual Invasion upon the Articles of the Church of *England*, from which the *Declaration* upon the Word of a King, is the very thing that secures him: the other only a Civil Duty requir'd in Obedience to the King's Command: and the Refusal of it only a piece of *Fineness* to render the King's Authority and his Proceedings suspected to the People.

LETTER.

Thirdly, *I suppose no man will doubt, but the King intends, that our Reading the Declaration should signifie to the Nation, our Consent and Approbation of it; for the Declaration does not want Publishing, for it is sufficiently known already: but our Reading it in our Churches must serve instead of Addresses of Thanks, which the Clergy generally refused, tho it was only to Thank the King for his Gracious Promises renewed to the Church of* England, *in his Declaration, which was much more innocent, than to publish the Declaration it self in our Churches: This would perswade one, that the King thinks our reading the Declaration, to signifie our Consent, and that the People will think it to be so. And he that can satisfie his Conscience, to do an action without consent, which the nature of the Thing, the Design, and intention of the Command, and the Sense of the People expound to be a Consent, may, I think, as well satisfie himself with Equivocations and mental Reservations.*

ANSWER.

Here is nothing still but barely repeated Suppositions, together with an open and glory'd-in Confession of the Ingratitude of the generality of the Church of *England*; than which he could not certainly have bestow'd a worse Character either upon himself or his Friends. Since it was an Obstinate Ingratitude that no renewancer of the King's Favours could reconcile to him, as proceeding from a sowre Disgust, that his Majesty had granted to others the same Liberty which they enjoy'd. As if all Mankind besides them, were bound to groan under the continual Yoak of their *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, no less Rigorous and Uncharitable. To the remainder of this part, the Gentleman has form'd a very substantial Answer of himself. *For*, says he,

LETTER.

There are two things to be answered to this, which must be considered.

I. That the People understand our Minds, and see that this is matter of Force upon us, and meer Obedience to the King.

ANSWER.

Then the Refusal was a work of Supererogation, the People being better instructed, than all their reading could teach them; and then they must fall that way by going about to instruct them by their Obstinacy, who were of opinion that their Obedience would have been a far better Admonishment. *To which he answers,*

LETTER.

1. That *possibly the People do understand that the matter of the Declaration is against our Principles; But is this any excuse, that we read that, and by reading recommend that to them, which is against our own Consciences and Judgments? Reading the Declaration would be no Fault at all, but our Duty, when the King commands it, did we approve of the matter of it; but to consent to teach our People such Doctrines as we think contrary to the Laws of God, or the Laws of the Land, does not lessen but aggravate the Fault, and People must be very good natur'd to think this an Excuse.*

2. *It is not likely that all the people will be of a mind in this matter, some may excuse it, others, and those it may be the most, the best, and the wisest men will condemn us for it, and then how shall we justifie our selves against their Censures? when the world will be divided in their Opinions, the plain way is certainly the best, to do what we can justifie our selves, and then let men judge as they please. No men in* England *will*

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be pleased with our Reading the Declaration, but those who hope to make great advantage of it against us, and against our Church & Religion: others will severely condemn us for it, & censure us as false to our Religion, and as Betrayers both of Church and State: and besides that, it does not become a Minister of Religion, to do any thing, which in the opinion of the most charitable men can only be excused; for what needs an excuse, is either a fault, or looks very like one; besides this I say, I will not trust mens Charity, those who have suffered themselves in this Cause, will not excuse us for fear of suffering; those who are inclined to excuse us now, will not do so when they consider the thing better, and come to feel the ill consequences of it: when our Enemies open their Eyes, & tell them what our Reading the Declaration signified, which they will then tell us we ought to have seen before, tho they were not bound to see it; for we are to guide and instruct them, not they us.

ANSWER.

Tempora mutantur & nos mutamur in illis —— Time was when there was nothing more abominable, more hainous, or more cry'd down by the Gowned Clergy of *England*, than *Vox Populi*; now *Vox populi* is the only *Suprema lex* that guides them; they have no other fears than of the Condemnations and Censures of *Vox Populi*; *Vox populi* is *Vox Dei*, and they dare not read the King's Declaration for fear of *Vox populi*: And all this out of an Infallible Certainty, that no people in *England* will be pleased with their reading the Declaration but their Enemies. More than this, they see ill Consequences in the Declaration, and find Doctrines in the Declaration contrary to the Laws of God and the Land; invisible however to all those vast numbers of lowd and thankful Addressers for the publishing of it. Quick-sighted *Synxes* in their own Concerns: but such as car'd so little for the Voice of the People, that they never melted at the Groans of the People, when they had the Scourge in their hands.

LETTER.

II. Others therefore think, that when we read the Declaration, we should publickly profess, that it is not our own judgment, but that we only read it in obedience to the King; and then our reading it cannot imply our consent to it: Now this is only Protestatio contra factum, *which all people will laugh at, and scorn us for; for such a solemn reading it in the time of Divine Service, when all men ought to be most grave and serious, and far from dissembling with God or Men, does in the nature of the thing imply our approbation; and should we declare the contrary, when we read it, what shall we say to those who ask us, Why then do you read it? But let those who have a mind try this way, which, for my part, I take to be a greater and more unjustifiable*

just cause of Excommunication of the King, that has revoked it; and I suppose, those who do not read it, will be thought to have much honester Consciences, and will escape as well as those who read it and protest against it: and yet nothing less than an express Protestation against it will salve this matter; for only to say, they read it merely in obedience to the King, does not express their dislent: it signifies indeed, that they would not have read it, if the King had not commanded it; but these words do not signifie, that they disapprove of the Declaration, when they read it, they barely in obedience to the King, signifie their approbation of it; as much as affirmation signifies a consent. See we pray how it fared with those in King Charles the First's Reign, who read the Book of Sports *as it was called, and then preached against it.*

ANSWER.

Then it appears that the Declaration has been read, and that by several Gentlemen of the Church of *England* also. So that it appears that the reading of it is not of that dangerous Consequence to the Conscience, as the Author of the *Letter* would pretend to. For we are to have that charity for those that read it as for those that refused it, that the former had as much care for their Consciences, as the latter. Now then to what purpose all these Terrors and affrights of Conscience, all this dread of the censures of the People for reading it, since the business admits such a positive variety of Opinion. The Loyal and Obedient may read it, but the Scrupulous and Refractory will not. Well then, if the case be so, the *City Clergyman* should have done well, to have reserv'd his Niceties and Slicing of significations to himself, and not have gone about so Zealously to spread the infection of his Scruples to the discouragement of others. But he has past the *Rubicon* and will forward.

LETTER.

To return then to our Argument; If reading the Declaration in our Churches be in the nature of the action, in the intention of the Command, in the opinion of the People, an interpretative consent to it, I think my self bound in conscience not to read it, because I am bound in conscience not to approve it.

ANSWER.

To this the Loyal Gentlemen that read it, reply, That if Reading the Declaration in their Churches, be neither in the nature of the Action, nor in the Intention of the Command, nor in the Opinion of the People an Interpretative Consent to it; they think themselves bound in conscience to read it, because they are bound in conscience to approve it. But, says he,

LETTER.

It is against the Constitution of the Church of England, *which is established by Law, and to which I have subscribed, and therefore am bound in conscience to teach nothing contrary to it, while this Obligation lasts.*

ANSWER.

He must of necessity allow the Constitution of the Church of *England* to be a strange unchuitable constitution, that will not allow Liberty of Conscience to any but it self. And it is his misfortune that he has subscribed to a Church that wants the bond of Perfection, which is the reason that many believes he mistakes the Constitution of the Church of *England*.

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LETTER.

It is to teach an Unlimited and Universal Toleration, which the Parliament in 72. declared Illegal, and which has been Condemned by the Christian Church in all Ages.

ANSWER.

What the Parliament Declared in 72, signifies nothing against the Authority of the Scripture, which all along declares the contrary. And whereas the Gentleman is pleased to say, That Universal Toleration has been condemned by the Christian Church in all Ages; There is nothing more contrary to the infinite Sayings of the Primitive Fathers and their Successors, and that celebrated Maxim of *Tertullian*, *Religionis non est Religionem cogere.*

LETTER.

It is to teach my People, that they need never come to Church more, but have my free Leave, as they have the King's, to go to a Conventicle or to Mass.

ANSWER.

This is like Cardinal *Wolsey*, *Ego & Rex*, *His leave and the King's.* But they are a sorry sort of People, That do not know already, That a Rector of a Parish is no Sovereign; but that the People may come and go where they please without his Leave.

LETTER.

It is to teach the Dispensing Power, which alters what has been formerly thought, the whole Constitution of this Church and Kingdom, which we dare not do till we have the Authority of Parliament for it.

ANSWER.

It seems the King's Authority signifies nothing, with this City Clergyman. But if he had the Authority of Parliament for it, he would stretch his Conscience, and Read the Declaration. In the mean time, The King's Dispensive Power is no Business for a Man in his Station to meddle with: Nor is he to be such a Judge of Royal Declarations, as to be the Interpreter of their Meaning or Intention. That Power is not within the Verge of his Desk or Pulpit either, neither can the

Authority of Parliament warrant any ſuch Boldneſs among Eccleſiaſticks.

LETTER.

It is to Recommend to our People, the Choice of ſuch Perſons to ſit in Parliament, as ſhall take away the Teſt *and* Penal Laws, *which moſt of the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation have declared their Judgment againſt.*

ANSWER.

Then, not to Read the Declaration, is to recommend to the People, the Choice of ſuch Perſons, as ſhall not take away the Teſt and Penal Laws; as if the Peoples Election of Parliament Men depended upon the Recommendation of the City-Clergymen. But the Declaration requires no ſuch Officious Recommendation from them: And therefore the Gentleman might have ſpared his Complement to the Nobility and Gentry.

LETTER.

It is to condemn all thoſe Great and Worthy Patriots of their Country, who forfeited the deareſt thing in the World to them, next a good Conſcience, viz. *The Favour of their Prince, and a great many Honourable and Profitable Imployments with it, rather than conſent to that Propoſal of taking away the* Teſt *and* Penal Laws, *which they apprehend deſtructive to the* Church of England *and the* Proteſtant Religion; *and he who can in Conſcience do all this, I think need ſcruple nothing.*

ANSWER.

The Nobility and Gentry are mightily beholding to the City-Clergyman for his kind Encomiums: But whether they would have thought it any Condemnation of their Reſolutions, in Reference to the Penal Laws and Teſt, is uncertain; for the Nobility and Gentry do not depend upon this Gentleman's Divinity; their Motions, and the Circumſtances that guide their Actions being of a higher Nature, than to care for the Condemnation of their Chaplains. However, if the Nobility and Gentry were ſo Kind to do what they did for their ſakes, the City-Clergyman has ill retaliated their Favour, to lay the Load of his Actual Diſobedience upon the Shoulders of the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation. But now he's come to his Effects and ill Conſequences: for ſays he,

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LETTER.

For let us consider further, What the Effects and Consequences of our Reading the Declaration are likely to be, and I think they are Matter of Conscience too, when they are Evident and Apparent.

This will certainly render our Persons and Ministry infinitely Contemptible, which is against that Apostolick Canon, Let no man despise thee, *Tit.* 2. 15. *That is, so to Behave himself in his Ministerial Office, as not to fall under Contempt; and therefore this obliges the Conscience, not to make our selves Ridiculous, nor to render our Ministry, our Counsels, Exhortations, Preaching, Writing, of no effect, which is a thousand times worse than being Silenced: Our Sufferings will Preach more effectually to the People, when we cannot Speak to them: But he who for Fear or Cowardize, or the Love of this World, betrays his Church and Religion by undue Compliances, and will certainly be thought to do so, may continue to Preach, but to no purpose; and when we have rendred our selves Ridiculous and contemptible, we shall then quickly Fall, and Fall unpitied.*

ANSWER.

He is now wrapt up in the Spirit of Prophesie, what Strange things will befal him for reading the Declaration, which he calls a Betraying the Church by undue Complyances: But the Prophet mistakes the Points that renders the Ministerial Office he means Ridiculous; for while they keep to the Business of Sound Doctrine, and meerly True Divinity, there is not a more Profound or Learned Clergy in the World, than are they of the Church of *England*; but when they will be Studying the Points of Royal Declarations, which are Acts of State, will be making their Pulpits the Stages of Farce and Satyr, will be Interloping and Intruding into State Affairs, which nothing at all concern them; when they will be Teaching the King, the Judges, Deputy Lieutenants, and all other Magistrates, their Duties: This is that which renders the Ministry, before mentioned, or any Ministry in the World, Ridiculous. And it is to be feared, The City-Clergyman has not altogether freed himself from that Contempt, in calling the Reading of the Declaration, a Betraying of the Church by Undue Complyances, and then Complementing the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation to Justifie his Ridiculous Language; and all this to gain Popularity, or to preserve the Possession of his Living under

the Name of the Protestant Religion; for he must not take it amiss, That others dive with the same severity into his Meaning as he dives into the King's Intentions.

LETTER.

There is nothing will so effectually tend to the final Ruin of the Church of England, *because our Reading the Declaration will Discourage, or Provoke, or misguide, all the Friends the Church of* England *has: can we blame any man for not preserving the Laws and the Religion of our Church and Nation, when we our selves will venture nothing for it? can we blame any Man for consenting to Repeal the* Test *and* Penal Laws, *when we recommend it to them by Reading the Declaration? Have we not Reason to expect that the Nobility and Gentry, who have already Suffered in this Cause, when they hear themselves condemned for it in all the Churches of* England, *will think it time to mend such a Fault, and reconcile themselves to their Prince? and if our Church fall this way, is there any Reason to expect that it should ever rise again? These Consequences are almost as evident as Demonstrations, and let it be what it will in it self, which I foresee will destroy the* Church of England *and the* Protestant Religion *and* Interest, *I think I ought to make as much Conscience of doing it, as of doing the most immoral Action in Nature.*

ANSWER.

Here we find him talking as if the Final Ruine of the Church of *England*, lay upon the Church of *England*-mens Reading or Not Reading the Declaration, and that by Not Reading it, they had saved the *Palladium*'s and *Ancilia* of their Religion. And all these Rodomontado's upon bare Suppositions and Imaginations no ways compatible to Reason; for it is not Rational to Believe, That the Nobility and Gentlemen of *England*, when they delivered their Sentiments contrary to what was Proposed to them concerning the Test (for as to the Penal Laws, 'tis well known, Their Judgments are much more Remiss) did what they did for Fear of being Condemned by the *Levites* whom they feed. 'Tis therefore a Presumption in the *City-clergyman* to arrogate in the Plural Number such a Power over the Nobility and Gentry, as if they were bound to Justifie his and his Friend's particular Acts of Disobedience,

dience, and could not be Safe in their Resolutions, unless they were Obstinate. What was proposed to the Nobility and Gentry was one thing, what was commanded them was another; and there is a great Difference between not Consenting to a Proposal, and not Submitting to a Sovereign Command.

LETTER.

To say that these mischievous Consequences are not absolutely necessary, and therefore do not affect the Conscience, because we are not certain they will follow, is a very mean Objection. Moral Actions indeed have not such necessary Consequences, as Natural Causes have Necessary Effects; because no Moral Causes act necessarily. Reading the Declaration will not as necessarily destroy the Church of England, *as Fire burns Wood; but if the Consequence be plain and evident, the most likely thing that can happen, if it be unreasonable to expect any other, if it be what is plainly intended and designed, either I must never have any regard to Moral Consequences of my Actions, or if ever they are to be consider'd, they are in this case.*

Why are the Nobility and Gentry so extremely averse to the Repeal of the Test and Penal Laws? why do they forfeit the King's Favour, and their Honourable Stations, rather than comply with it? If you say that this tends to destroy the Church of England *and the Protestant Religion, I ask whether this be the necessary consequence of it? whether the King cannot keep his Promise to the Church of* England *if the Test and Penal Laws be repealed? We cannot say, but this may be: and yet the Nation does not think fit to try it; and we commend those Great Men who deny it; and if the same Questions were put to us, we think we ought in Conscience to deny them our selves: and are there not as high probabilities, that our Reading the Declaration will promote the Repeal of the Test and Penal Laws, as that such a Repeal will ruine our Constitution, and bring in Popery upon us? Is it not as probable, that such a Complyance in us, will disoblige all the Nobility and Gentry, who have hitherto been firm to us, as that when the power of the Nation is put into Popish Hands; by the Repeal of such Tests and Laws, the Priests and Jesuites may find some salvo for the Kings Conscience, and persuade him to forget his Promise to the Church of* England? *and if the probable ill consequences of Repealing the Test and Penal Laws, be a good reason not to comply with it, I cannot see but that the as*

probable

probable ill consequences of Reading the Declaration, is as good a reason not to Read it.

ANSWER.

These are all meer Comments and Descants of the City-Clergyman, upon the Honour and Conscience of his Majesty, and the evil design of the Declaration upon the Church of *England*, drawn from Probabilities of the evil consequences of Repealing the Penal Laws and Test, which the Church of *England* must no more part with, then the *Jews* with their Ark, without exposing themselves to utter ruine and destruction. For the charitable Clergyman takes no care of any other part of the Protestant Religion, so the Church of *England* be secure. To all which if he would have but vouchsaf'd to have read the Declaration, he might have found an Answer shining fully out, and dispelling all the Fogs and Mists of his Probable Consequences in His Majesty's own words; where he declares a second time, *That ever since His* granting *the Indulgence, he has made it* His *principal Care to see it preserved without distinction*; And farther adds his Resolutions, *To use His utmost Endeavours* to Establish *Liberty of Conscience* on such just and equal foundations, as will render it unalterable, and *secure to* All *People the free Exercise of their Religion for ever.* But this will not serve the City-Clergy-man's turn; he must have the Rains of Temporal as well as Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in his own hand, and drive on for ever, or else there is nothing to be done. They are like *Cæsar*, contemning all Superiors; and like *Pompey*, disdaining all Equals. A passionate conceit of their own Perfection above all other, which no Man of common sense can be reconcil'd to; and a convincing Argument that those Persons must have but little or no Conscience themselves, who with so much vigor and obstinacy labour to uphold a Civil Persecution of Penal Laws and Tests, so directly opposite to all the Dictates of Conscience and Reason.

LETTER.

The most material Objection is, That the Dissenters, whom we ought not to provoke, will expound our not Reading it, to be the effect of a Persecuting Spirit: Now I wonder Men should lay any weight on this, who will not allow the most probable consequences of our Actions,

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to have any influence upon Conſcience; for if we muſt compare conſequences, to diſoblige all the Nobility and Gentry by Reading it, is likely to be much more fatal, than to anger the Diſſenters; and it is more likely, and there is much more reaſon for it, that one ſhould be offended than the other: For the Diſſenters who are Wiſe and Conſidering, are ſenſible of the Snare themſelves, and though they deſire Eaſe and Liberty, they are not willing to have it with ſuch apparent hazard of Church and State: I am ſure that though we were never ſo deſirous that they might have their Liberty, (and when there is opportunity of ſhewing our Inclinations without danger, they may find that we are not ſuch Perſecutors as we are repreſented,) yet we cannot conſent that they ſhould have it this way, which they will find the dearest Liberty that ever was granted.

ANSWER.

After his Complements put upon the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation, the Author of the Letter deſcends to ſcrape a new acquaintance with the Diſſenters, and fain would draw them into his Belief, upon a very odd ſurmiſe, that they are now in ſome kind of manner reconcil'd. But the Complement is at ſuch a remote diſtance, that he betray'd his Politicks to court them at ſuch an indifferent rate. And indeed his Expreſſions are ſo obſcure, that if this Church of *England* Man, is ſo nice that he dare not truſt the King upon ſuch clear and ſolemn Promiſes, the Diſſenters, who have had ſuch ſevere Experience of their Favours, have much leſs reaſon to credit the forc'd Complement of the *City-Clergyman*. This is only to be wonder'd at, that the *City-Clergyman* ſhould make the King ſo dear a Seller of *Liberty of Conſcience*, when there was no Price could purchaſe it from the Perſecution of the Penal Law-Men, his undoubted Brethren.

LETTER.

This Sir, is our Caſe in ſhort, the Difficulties are great on both ſides, and therefore now if ever, we ought to beſiege Heaven with our Prayers, for Wiſdom, and Counſel and Courage, that God would protect his Church and Reformed Chriſtianity, againſt all the devices of their Enemies: Which is the daily and hearty Prayer of

SIR,

May 22. 1688. Your Friend and Brother.

ANSWER.

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ANSWER.

Being thus come from his Politicks to his Prayers, 'tis time to leave him, not doubting but if his Prayers be Just, they will be heard; if not, neither his Letter nor his Prayers will signifie any thing.

POSTSCRIPT.

I *Have just now seen* H. Care's *Paper, called,* The Publick Occurrences, *which came out to day, and cannot but set you right as to his News about the Reading of the Declaration on* Sunday: *He tells you,* 'That several Divines *of the Church of* England, *in and about the City, eminent for their Piety and Moderation, did Yesterday Read His Majesty's late Declaration in their Churches, according to the Order in that behalf; but some (to the great surprize of their Parishioners) were pleased to* decline *it. You in the Country are from this Account to believe, that it was Read here by the generality of the Clergy, and by the eminent Men among them? But I can and do assure you, that this is one of the most impudent Lyes that ever was printed: For as to this City which hath above a Hundred Parishes in it, it was Read only in Four or Five Churches, all the rest and best of the Clergy refusing it every where. I will spare their Names who Read it; but should I mention them, it would make you who know this City, a little heartily to deride* H. C's. *Account of them. And for the Surprize he talks of, the contrary of it is so true, that in* Wood-street, *where it was Read by one Dr.* M. *the People generally went out of the Church. This I tell you, that you may be provided for the future against such an impudent Lyar, who, for Bread, can vouch and put about the Nation, the falsest of things.*

I am Yours.

ANSWER.

The City-Clergyman has given the Lye to the Author of the *Publick Occurrences*: It were to be wish'd that the Author had nam'd all the rest besides those we already know, that were so Loyal as to Read the Declaration. If they were not so numerous as they are said to be in the *Occurrences*, we wish they had been as many in number as their Loyalty required. But we leave this for the Author himself, to do himself Justice by a more particular Answer.

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